

ITEM 5b

Minute extract

148/15 Council Funding for Services in the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector

The Council Cabinet considered a report on Council Funding for Services in the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector. Derby City Council had a long history of working with and investing in the local voluntary sector to support local communities. Over the last decade Council grant spending in the VCS had been approximately £21m.

Derby City Council was committed to working with the voluntary sector and where appropriate advising them of possible opportunities to bid for commissioned services, but also personal budget related work such as the modernisation of day care services.

The Council was hopeful that additional funding announced for the Better Care Fund would allow new opportunities for local providers particularly the voluntary sector. Although we appreciate this funding would not be available until 2018/19.

The 15 July 2015 Council Cabinet Report “Big Conversation – Service Need Assessments and Consultations” identified that it was likely that further reductions would be made to the funding provided by Central Government for local authorities. Council Cabinet agreed to re-launch the Big Conversation consultation exercise.

A list of potential service areas were identified where consultation would be carried out. One of the areas for further consideration was non-statutory services provided by the Voluntary Community and Faith Sector. These services, listed in Appendix 2 of the report, provided a range of support to citizens and the sector itself.

The majority of the services listed in Appendix 2 of the report were allocated funding through a joint Council/Health grant aid programme in 2011-12. The generalist and legal advice service provided by Citizens Advice and Law Centre was commissioned through Council funded tender in 2012-13. A joint consultation and decision making process was agreed with Southern Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group (SDCCG) to inform the recommendations within the report.

The consultation started on 7 September and ended on 13 November 2015. The consultation sought comments from funded organisations, their service users, the public and other stakeholders.

Whilst the sector understands the reasons behind our proposals, this would create many difficult challenges for them and their customers, as reflected in the responses to the consultation.

Due to the budgetary constraints as a result of Government cuts to local authority funding, it was recommended that the savings contained within the report go ahead, in order to protect statutory services, which the Council was legally obliged to do.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Governance Board requested Council Cabinet to find the means of continuing to provide support to Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Groups if it had proved successful over the last 12 months.

Options Considered

1. To continue or reduce the funding for the current list of services.
2. To maintain or reduce the current level of funding and use this to support future Council only, or joint commissioning with the SDCCG for future services that met updated Outcomes for Grant Funded services in the VCF.

These options would present additional difficulties in meeting the challenging budget saving targets within the 2016-19 budget and would have a negative impact upon the Council's ability to meet its other statutory responsibilities.

Decision

1. To approve that officers continue to work with the voluntary sector and other partners to identify opportunities for the sector in the future.
2. To approve in line with Council's 2016/17 budget, exit from the Council element of funding with the named organisations listed at appendix 2 of the report.
3. To approve that officers of the Council offer support and advice to organisations wherever possible to mitigate the impact of the funding decision.
4. To accept the recommendation from the Corporate Scrutiny and Governance Board to find the means of continuing to provide to support Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector groups if it had proved successful over the last 12 months.

Reasons

1. Savings in the identified services was in line with the budget consultation proposals and would meet savings targets set out in the 2016/17 budget.
2. Taking action to mitigate the impact of the funding decision for the affected non-statutory services in the VCF sector would support organisations to explore other sources of funding, alternative service models and other options for service users.
3. There may be service opportunities in the future for which the voluntary sector was well placed to respond.